



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

December 11, 2003

Press Release

\$8-MILLION WORTH OF COUNTERFEIT COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS SEIZED ***ICE Warns Holiday Shoppers About Hazards Of Counterfeit Goods***

Washington, D.C. -Recent seizures by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in Houston and New York City netted nearly \$8-million worth of counterfeit goods.

ICE Assistant Secretary Michael J. Garcia, Chairman Hal Stratton, of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Mr. John Verscaj, Vice President and General Counsel of Underwriters Laboratory Inc. (UL) today warned holiday shoppers to be wary of purchasing counterfeit merchandise that could pose serious safety hazards.

"Recent Homeland Security operations have uncovered a large number of imported, potentially dangerous, counterfeit goods. These items include merchandise bought in huge quantities during the holiday season, such as faulty electrical cords and power-strips that melted and burned during laboratory safety testing, and batteries that leaked chemicals," said Assistant Secretary Garcia.



"Counterfeit products, ranging from knock-off computer software to counterfeit electronic items--and even prescription drugs--are an enormous drain on the U.S. economy because they cost legitimate businesses billions of dollars every year," said Garcia. "Furthermore, many of those involved in counterfeit merchandising are affiliated with global organized crime syndicates. ICE will continue to aggressively combat this illegal activity to protect U.S. consumers and the U.S. economy," he added.

A sample of the products seized by ICE was sent to UL in Melville, NY, for evaluation because the items were labeled with the UL Mark, signifying that a product has undergone rigorous testing and meets various safety standards. Factories making UL-Listed products are also subject to unannounced visits from UL inspectors who ensure that the products continue to be manufactured according to UL standards. UL technicians found that the items seized by ICE were fraudulently labeled with their certification mark, were never tested by the laboratory and failed to meet under standard safety testing.

Hal Stratton, Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission warned consumers, “CPSC is working closely with Homeland Security to remove counterfeit products from the stream of commerce. These products are dangerous because they often do not meet government or industry safety standards, as was the case with the extension cords seized in Houston and New York. Between 1994 and 2000, CPSC is aware of an estimated 58 electrocutions due to contact with an unsafe extension cord.”

ICE’s investigation is ongoing and agents will continue seizing counterfeit items and bringing to justice manufacturers, importers and distributors of illegal contraband.